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THE DISCOVERY
OF AMERICA.

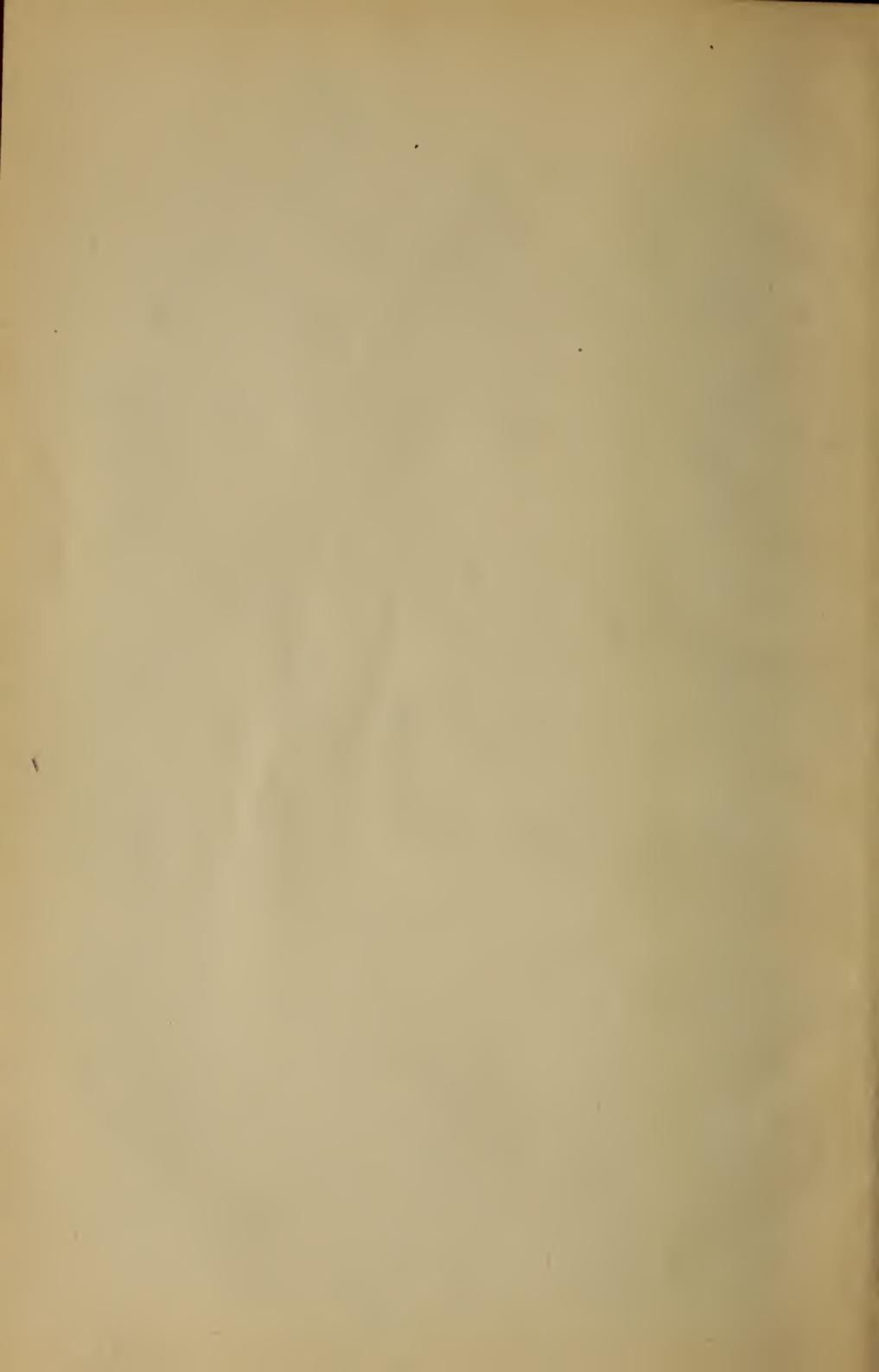
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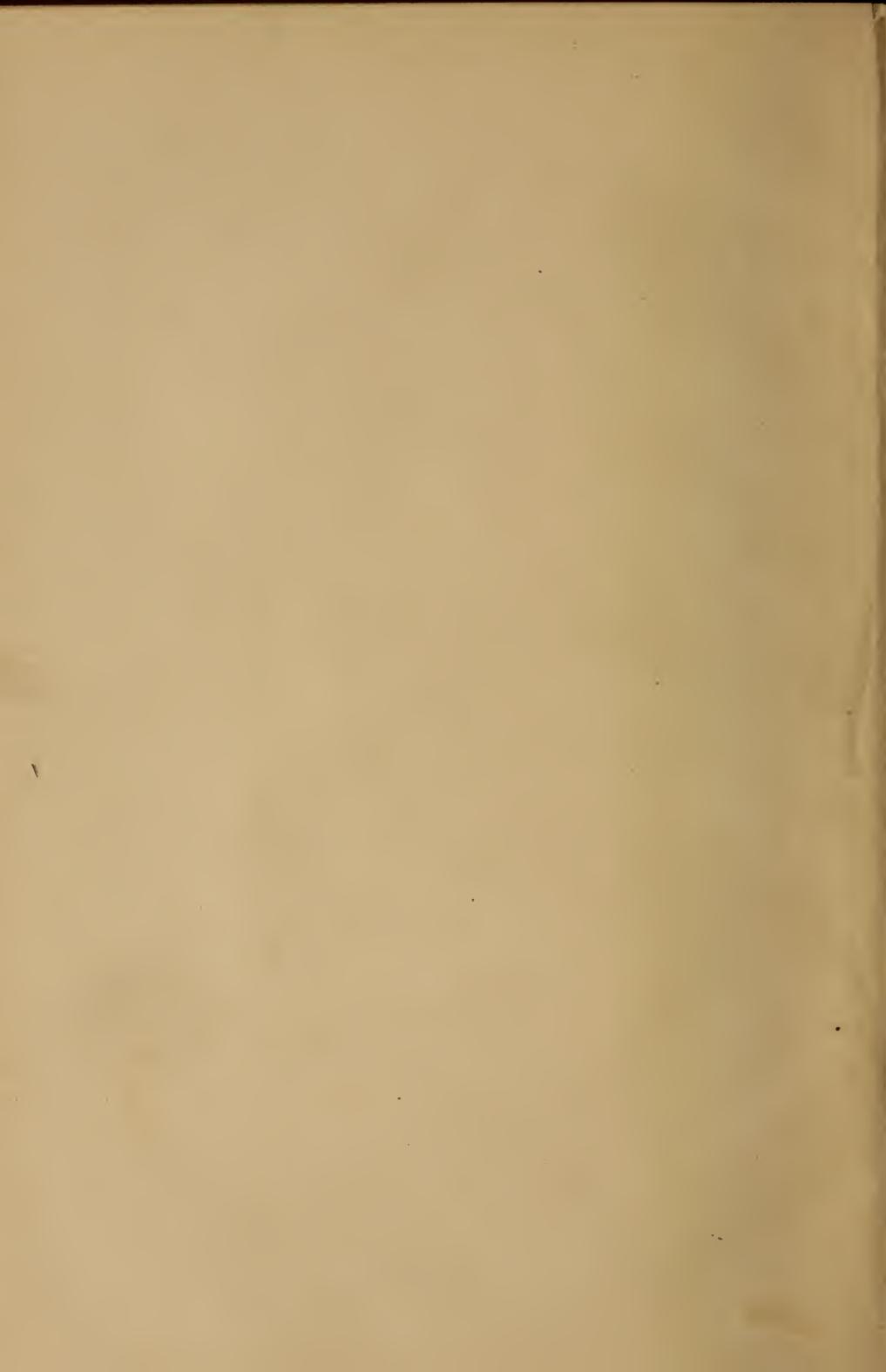
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DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

BY

WARREN HOLDEN.



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THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

IN every tongue the school-boy reads the tale,
How, free from doubt, “The Admiral” set sail
Upon the unknown, boundless “Ocean Sea,”
Where never viking ventured wittingly.
Not Jason searching for the golden fleece,
Nor wise Ulysses wandering far from Greece,
Nor famed *Æ*neas wrecked on Libyan shore,
Conceived the terrors Ocean had in store.
Wide-weltering waters,—land long lost to view,—
No friendly shore to save a struggling crew
When yawning waves engulf their fragile bark;
The flood sweeps over them and leaves no mark.

After long, weary years of hope delayed,
By king and courtier craftily betrayed,—
Oft-answered arguments compelled to meet,
Which ignorance and prejudice repeat
With grave persistence: If the world were round,
How could antipodes maintain their ground?—
A wandering mendicant from court to court,
Of pity, scorn, and ridicule the sport,
At last he speeds. Castile's illustrious queen,
Inspired by Heaven with faith in things unseen,
Pledges her jewels for an unborn age,
And history turns her most eventful page.

Alone amid the treacherous ocean tides,
Confronting mutiny, alone he bides
The symbol of indomitable will.
What urgent purpose has he to fulfil?
What motive can sustain such steadfast mood,
The crucial test of human fortitude?

Is it ambition for a deathless name,
The generous infirmity of fame ?
Or is it the ignoble thirst for gold,
The soul's birthright to sordid mammon sold ?
Or seeks he to advance the holy cross,
And rescue heathen from eternal loss ?
Who can adjust the claims upon his heart,
To God, to man, to self, their proper part ?
Letters he bore to Tartary's Grand Khan,
Commissioned to unfold salvation's plan ;
And, reaching India by the shortest way,
How easy to bring riches from Cathay !
What holy vows may with such wealth be paid !
May not the king equip a new crusade,
And rescue from the hand of infidel
The sepulchre where Christian memories dwell ?

Though surface motives seem to shape men's course,
They feel the under-current's silent force ;

And, spite of choice, there is a special rôle
That each must fill to harmonize the whole.
Columbus was the unconscious hand of fate,
Predestined to unlock the golden gate
Of this wide, hospitable hemisphere,
The future home of all that is most dear
To human hope beset by tyranny,—
The rights of conscience and of industry.

Search history throughout. You scarce shall find
A firmer heart, a more self-centred mind;
Nor may you think earth's common motives can
Evolve and discipline this type of man.
When nature undertakes a grand assay,
She deftly mingles with our common clay
Some rare ingredient from a higher sphere,
To temper well her chosen pioneer.

Calm, many-sided, self-reliant soul,
When first the needle varied from the pole

And filled the boldest pilots with affright,
His fertile genius proved the compass right.
As each new danger threatened to devour,
He quelled the monster with a quiet power.
Ominous signs that wakened natural fear
To his quick sense revealed new cause of cheer.

In vain the anxious seamen looked for land :
A waste of waters spread on every hand.
The loneliness of the deserted sea,
With only silent stars for company,
Oppressed their homesick souls with strange dismay,
And made them melancholy's helpless prey.

At such a time how towered that master-mind
Above the common weakness of mankind !
Even as a mother soothes her children's fears
With tender voice, and gently dries their tears,
He stoops from lofty contemplation's height
With cheering words to chase away their fright.

“Land! land!” in eager haste a sailor cries;
“Land! land!” with one glad voice the crew replies.
From depths of woe to heights of joy they spring,
And by-gone dangers to the winds they fling.

What splendid verdure bursts upon the sight,
Where flowers and blossoms lend contrasting light,
While birds of brilliant plumage gayly throng,
Their various colors matched by varied song.
Hesperian gardens hitherward have strayed:
Luxuriant foliage offers cooling shade,
Sweet odors float upon the balmy air,
And bending boughs hold out their fruitage fair.

The natives, clad in innocence, appear
In naked beauty, without shame or fear.
With awe and simple wonder prepossessed,
The islander receives his heavenly guest,
And shares his little store with open hand.
Too soon the illusion fades. They understand

Their sad mistake when avarice betrays
Its ugly features to their startled gaze.
The song and dance, that wont to while away
The idle hours of each returning day,
Have ceased, and to their joy succeeds the gloom
Of cruel slavery's soul-repressing doom.
Blood-hound and arquebuse have done their work,
And Christian masters rival the fell Turk.
With spirits crushed by fortune's cruel stroke,
The gentle race bows 'neath the galling yoke.
All day they stoop along the river's strand,
Sifting, with ceaseless toil, the gold-specked sand.
And each must bring full dole of the vile dust
To sate extortion's all-devouring lust.
Another Eden angels there bewail
Where self, the serpent, left his blighting trail.

Columbus needs must work with human tools;
And wisest plans are marred by knaves and fools.

His high ideal like a beacon shone,
A constant light that led him ever on;
While oft his crew's low-thoughted lust of gain
Fettered his will and made all effort vain.

Pass quickly by the sickening, sordid strife
For wealth at sacrifice of human life;
For doubtful honor much too dearly bought
Where cunning power with honest merit fought.
Let petty worldlings scramble for the spoils;
True worth and honor shun their vulgar broils.

Columbus struggles bravely with his fate.
Envy and craft and greed and secret hate
Obstruct his path with well-contrived delay;
On mind and body care and sickness prey.
Yet on he presses. No malign portent
Has power to make his constant heart relent.
At last ingratitude rewards his pains:
The hero languishes in felon's chains.

Unequal contest, where bare merit vied
With titles and hereditary pride.

When nature's workman has performed his task,
She bids him stand aside, nor questions ask
Of honors and rewards he may deserve.
Enough reward and honor but to serve.
For due approval wait a thousand years;
A race redeemed shall settle all arrears.

God's conscript in the holy war of man,
Columbus served for life and led the van.
His faults were unripe virtues of the time;
His virtues the rare growth of faith sublime.

Mere cowards may conceive a bold design,
The glorious deed to others they assign.
His courage marched beside his daring thought.
He faced the danger as a leader ought.

Like Bunyan's grovelling "man with the muck-rake,"
The many delve for filthy lucre's sake.
Columbus, faithful to his leading star,
Pursues a fixed ideal near and far.

Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Right
Thy bark was steered by heaven's directing light,
And thou hast gained the haven of the blest,
A better land than lured thy life-long quest.

What he achieved, Columbus never knew:
His grand discovery was veiled from view.
From Pisgah Moses saw the promised land,
Whereon his eager feet might never stand.
Columbus trod New Canaan's holy ground,
But his eyes saw not what his feet had found.
Another world had risen from the deep,
Long-lost Atlantis haply roused from sleep.
The early "cradle of the human race,"
The nurse of heroes, fills her former place.

Old prophecies, that fed the world's young hope,
Have found their time and place with ample scope.
The prayers of saints and visions of the wise
Are brought to pass before our wondering eyes.

But the soul's heritage is left unseized
Until the coarser cravings are appeased.
The first great harvest of corrupting gold
Is reaped ere men are willing to be told
Of richer mines abounding in the soil,
Ready to yield their wealth to moderate toil.
Here breadth of empire, stretched from east to west,
Has taxed invention with severest test.
Machines endowed with more than manual skill
Redouble products at their maker's will.
Engines, performing labor's heavier part,
Release men's hands for works of finer art.
By railroad, telegraph, and telephone
The bounds of time and space are overflowed.

In floating palaces of fairy stamp,
The seeming products of Aladdin's lamp,
We're ferried o'er the boisterous ocean stream
Amid the luxuries of an Eastern dream.

The lightning's flash, startling with sudden glare,
Like eyes of angry beast roused from his lair,
Is trained to humble service of the night,
And shines with steady beam of useful light.

But physical inventions fail alone
To satisfy the mind capacious grown.

Lightning and steam, reduced to servitude,
Are outward signs of inward force subdued.

Let pure invention tax its skill to find
Machinery to move the common mind ;
Levers to raise it to the plane of thought
Where metaphysic theories are wrought.

The invisible is but a veil. Behind
Is hid the laboratory of the mind.

Shut every door of sense, and far within
The soul's profound realities begin.
Worlds upon worlds to conquer loom up here.
Ambition may pursue a wide career,
With room for all, without their neighbors' leave
What they may dare to think and what achieve.
Unawed by hoar tradition's senile nod,
The coming man shall bow to none but God.

Columbia, freedom's chosen battle-ground,
Thy countless hills and endless shores resound
With clash and clang of intellectual swords,
Where champions claim the prize that truth awards.
Nor may they quit the thorough-foughten field
Till every form of slavery shall yield
To true religion, pure and undefiled,
Whose precepts may be followed by a child.
Its first command: Love God with all thy mind;
The second like it: Love all humankind.

These two commandments are the deep tap-roots
Whence laws of mercy are the native fruits.
King-craft and priest-craft, tyranny-born twins,
The scourges of the old world's in-bred sins,
Have here no biding-place. All shall be new;
And false pretence collapse at touch of true.
Evil, the cobra, lowers his threatening hood
Before the childlike innocence of good.

Prolonged and weary shall the struggle be
'Twixt world-wide tolerance and bigotry;
'Twixt greedy selfishness with grasping hand
And equity that meets each fair demand;
'Twixt party politics, a wily game,
And statesmanship with philanthropic aim.
Accept fixed fate's inflexible decree:
Man must obey in order to be free;
Man must be just before he can enjoy
The cup of life and find there no alloy.

Let each man own himself, act, word, and thought;
Let neither faith nor vote be sold nor bought,
Nor envy wealth its vantage insecure.

True wealth consists in things that must endure;
Things that all men alike may freely share,
Neither exclusive, perishing, nor rare ;
Things that no friend may give nor foe may take,
And only man's unbiased choice can make.

This full contentment love alone can give :
The more men love so much the more they live.
This is that unbought treasure of the heart
Which men take with them when they hence depart,—
Each pure affection,—pledge of human trust,
The mere intention to be kind and just,
The generous word, the sympathetic look ;
All, all are written in life's record book.
Nothing is lost. A man's immortal part
Is fashioned day by day within his heart.

Diogenes asked for unobstructed sun :
'Twas more than Alexander's victories won.
'Tis the soul's right to follow its true bent;
And meddling patrons may no more prevent;
And free America's the chosen spot
To realize, though late, the happy lot.
The final struggle of man's destiny
In this new world shall leave him ever free.
The charter of his sacred rights declares
All men, alike, are born coequal heirs
To life and liberty and happiness,
And bids each one the heritage possess.
The arrogance of an exclusive few,
Appropriating empire as their due,
Whether usurped by the strong hand of might,
Or held by custom's old prescriptive right,
On freedom's soil is openly defied.
The boasted privilege of titled pride
May still amuse the old world's chivalry
With childish toys of outworn heraldry;

But simple manhood is the motto now,
Its coat of arms an open, honest brow.
Old despots claimed to rule by right divine,
And jealously established their own line.
Now universal suffrage makes its choice :
God's will is echoed by the people's voice.
Lest bungling ignorance, with a two-edged vote,
Should cut its own or else its neighbor's throat,
The youth are 'prenticed to the guardian state,
As natural wards, to train and educate ;
To teach capacity its proper use,
And rescue new-born talent from abuse.
Mere license wishes to be let alone.
True liberty will ever frankly own
A brother's claims, and leave to murderous Cain
The independence selfishness may gain.
No hope too promising for love's elect.
What prophecy hath taught us to expect
Of mind's full growth, or soul's increasing worth,
May now take actual form in outward birth.

What dreams have pictured of love's halcyon days
May live again in noon tide's open blaze.
The waste and want of riotous excess
By sober thrift is turned to plenteousness.
Science shall teach the economic way,
And docile duty hasten to obey.
In non-essentials men may disagree,
Yet leave each other wholly conscience-free.

But freedom's altar fires alight once more,
Bursting confinement, leap from shore to shore;
Like prairie fires, when started, sure to spread
Till they consume the stubble dry and dead,—
The stubble of effete society,
Which cumbers many a land that shall be free.

Are kings so blinded? Will they not provide
For human nature's slowly rising tide,
Till anarchy and kindred broods transform
Mild elements into a maddened storm

Whose irresistible assault shall sweep
Sceptres and thrones upon time's rubbish heap?

Infinite power, that stillest the vain noise
Alike of sea and people out of poise,
Oh, make the puny wrath of man to cease,
And give the much-enduring nations peace!

Loitering beneath the old paternal roof,
Against new notions man grows habit-proof;
Lives as his fathers lived, and dies the same,
His chief distinction a proud family name.
Break custom's chain, escape her tangling mesh;
Explore new fields where all is young and fresh.
New life without awakes new life within,
And latent powers their office now begin.

Hereditary right and privilege
Protect the few with an impervious hedge.

The mass by narrow circumstance are bound
To trudge a treadmill's unprogressive round
Of sordid drudgery for starveling hire.

What faintest hope bids such a soul aspire?
If rumor reach him of this "no man's land,"
At every hazard let him seek its strand.
Come one, come all, of high or low degree;
Your only passport, fitness to be free.

Scarce three-score years, less than the shortest span
Allotted to a rounded life of man,
Since the brave Pottawatomie possessed
The hunting-grounds spread o'er the great Northwest.
A phantom city, looming from the lake,
The place of lowly wigwams seems to take.
The fleets of commerce crowd Chicago's strand,
Where frail canoes reposed upon the sand.
A million freemen here have built a home
Where nomad Indians erewhile used to roam.

Is it the mere mirage of heated brain
Casting its fair illusions o'er the plain ?
As if to prove the dream's reality,
With an unbounded hospitality,
They bid the world attend a mighty fair,
And bring their choicest products to compare ;
And see what youthful Samson can produce
With locks unshorn and limbs from shackles loose.

Columbus, couldst thou join this glorious fête,
Where all the nations meet to celebrate
The harvest sprung from the prolific seed
Sown for mankind by thy heroic deed,
How would thy soul be satisfied with peace
And thanks to God who giveth such increase !
This is no El Dorado's puerile dream,
Where gold and gems with dazzling splendor gleam
'Mid gorgeous scenes of idle luxury,
That lured thy gross companions o'er the sea :

This is the palace of Industrial Art.
Here many an honest hand hath borne a part,
Less skilful to consume than to produce,
While every product serves a human use.
The hand of skill, by modern science taught,
More marvels in machinery hath wrought
Than wonder-working Vulcan could conceive,
Or magic-mongers make their dupes believe;
Steam-hammers mightier than the sledge of Thor,
Wielded on giant works of peace and war,
Down to the almost microscopic screw
That holds its own with purpose fixed and true.
Mountains nor rivers check the bold career
Of the well-furnished civil engineer;
His thoughts are written large o'er spacious tracts,
Ideals realized in solid facts.
Never had prophet's telescopic eye
The power to bring such panorama nigh.
Yet is this grand climacteric but a stage
On the high road of an advancing age.

Four hundred years of trial show the trend
Of real progress. Manhood is the end.
A pseudo-aristocracy may gain
A fancied height, and look down with disdain
Upon the people as a lower class.
Its day is short. In silence let it pass.
True aristocracy, a nation's best,
Like leaven seeks to permeate the rest;
Not rising to a selfish, separate height,
Its aim to elevate and thus unite.
Still, men will differ both in taste and tact,
And outward circumstance record the fact.
Were all made rich alike by lawless power,
Think you the lot would last a single hour?
But though great wealth be garnered by the few,
A signal tendency now comes to view:
The rich incline to hold their goods in trust,
As stewards whom their Lord shall reckon just.
Elders survive who hailed the earliest ray
That heralded the dawn of this new day.

Slowly at first, now follow thick and fast
Names that shall lighten the whole sky at last.
Blame not the finite muse, ye starry host,
Whose countless names could not be here engrossed;
Whose emulation in philanthropy
Founds schools and libraries without a fee;
With hospitals and homes for old and young
So many they must needs be left unsung.
Employers, justly weighing what is due,
Invite their hands to share their revenue.
Co-operation is the magic key
To solve the labor problem peaceably.
"Am I my brother's keeper?" answered "yes,"
The feeblest brother may achieve success.
Has human nature changed? the sceptic cries:
Nay, but experience may ope its eyes.
Starving the workman till he learns to beg,
But kills the goose that lays the golden egg.
The idle ploughman suffers not alone;
And the whole hive is plundered by the drone.

Contented industry, with plenty paid,
Is true prosperity's best stock in trade;
And mutual confidence resists assault
Better than three-fold door of steel-clad vault.
Self-interest, defined as lasting good,
Is one with universal brotherhood.

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